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Chairman: Mr. Kuchinsky ..... (Ukraine)
later: Ms. Groux (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Switzerland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 98: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.25)

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.25: Working towards the elimination of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of honour

1. **Mr. Tekin** (Turkey), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.25 on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Bulgaria, Guatemala, Jordan, Monaco, Peru, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, Ukraine and Venezuela, said that the reference "ch. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II" should be deleted from footnote 7 on page 1. The sponsors believed that in order to put an end to crimes committed in the name of honour, which constituted one of the most odious forms of violence against women and girls, it was necessary to adopt a dual strategy involving, on the one hand, the enactment of effective laws and the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators and, on the other hand, the implementation of preventive measures and awareness campaigns to nurture a culture which rejected such acts. Accordingly, the draft resolution emphasized the need for action to raise people's awareness, end the impunity of the perpetrators and ensure the protection of the victims. It had been borne in mind in the preparation of the draft resolution, when a consensus had been reached which must now be maintained, that crimes committed in the name of honour had nothing to do with religious beliefs; the main purpose was to draw attention to the existence of the problem as an essential condition for solving it.

Agenda item 99: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.23)

Draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.23: Elimination of all forms of violence against women, including crimes identified in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

2. **Mr. Hayes** (Pakistan), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, which had been joined by Belarus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Yemen, said that for several sessions now the draft resolution on the item had been adopted by consensus, for it referred to all forms of violence and was therefore acceptable to a large number of countries from all regions. Accordingly, it was hoped that the draft resolution submitted at the present session, in which some technical points had been updated and a new paragraph 9 had been incorporated, would likewise be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 101: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/59/41 and Corr.1, A/59/184-S/2004/602, A/59/190, A/59/274 and A/59/331)

3. **Ms. Núñez de Odremán** (Venezuela) said that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. At the national level Venezuela had created a legal framework which included, amongst other instruments, the current National Constitution and the Comprehensive Protection of Children Act, whose implementation had produced an integrated system for the protection of children and their rights. The Government had brought about a major change in the design of public policies related to health services, the environment, education and food-supply and had overcome the privatization approach of the previous decade, thereby increasing the coverage of free medical care and the enrolment numbers at all levels of public education.

4. The Strategic Social Plan (2001-2007) of the Ministry of Health and Social Development was generating awareness of the need to protect health, giving priority to local activities designed to improve living conditions and provide universal access to quality services, with emphasis on children. The activities connected with the prevention of maternal and child mortality included Proyecto Vida (Project Life), which was being implemented in 26 municipalities in the 16 federal entities, and Proyecto Delta (Project Delta), which was aimed at 10 indigenous communities in the Amacuro Delta suffering extreme social exclusion and vulnerability. The Ministry has also been carrying out since 2001, in

the country's schools, the National Strategic Plan on HIV syndrome, which focused on halting vertical transmission and preventing all sexually transmitted and HIV/AIDS infections, as well as early pregnancies and violence in the family.

5. In the sphere of education, programmes had been carried out in such areas as education from the womb to age six, with community and family participation, the establishment of mother and child guidance centres, the provision of integrated health care, dietary and nutritional services and initial education, non-conventional integrated care and education services for indigenous children, the introduction of an integrated three-shift timetable and meals service in the country's schools, the completion of the baccalaureate course, the provision of alternative educational arrangements, and the school meals programme.

6. Her delegation was satisfied with the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, supported any initiative to secure improvement in the situation of children affected by armed conflicts, and called for greater efforts to incorporate issues connected with the protection of children in the programmes of the United Nations system. Venezuela was in favour of the education and training of members of the armed forces in respect for human rights, especially the human rights of children, and condemned the recruitment of children by State armies and by non-State armed groups, for it impaired the right of children to integrated and harmonious development. With a view to facilitating the prevention of child prostitution and child pornography, the National Children's Council had approved some general guidelines on the protection of children against sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation. An Intersectoral Commission against Sexual Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation had also been established. A plan for special protection and care of street children was being prepared in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Social Development. On the question of child labour, the Council on the Rights of the Child had formulated some general guidelines on the protection of the rights of child workers and was monitoring and participating in the national programme on child labour.

7. **Mr. Cordeiro** (Angola) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the countries members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It appreciated the efforts of UNICEF and other United Nations bodies to protect and promote the rights of children, the results of which could be assessed during the forthcoming review of progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Angola agreed with the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on a comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331) and hoped that their implementation would facilitate the establishment of a framework of rules and standards to ensure the adequate protection of children in situations of armed conflict. It also supported the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and encouraged him to continue his arduous work and strengthen his collaboration with UNICEF in order to mitigate the suffering of children.

8. Once peace had been achieved in Angola, the Government had formulated programmes aimed specifically at the provision of assistance to children in emergency situations. There had been a substantial increase in allocations from the State budget to social programmes providing support for children. The goals of the social and humanitarian programmes established by the Government included educational reform through the implementation of the "Education for all" programme, designed to eliminate illiteracy and improve gender equality, the promotion and improvement of maternal and child health, with special emphasis on breastfeeding and increased immunization coverage, the prevention and treatment of childhood diseases, increased assistance for children with disabilities, the tracing and reunification of the families of children separated from their parents, and the continuation of de-mining work throughout the country.

9. The rights and well-being of children were embodied in the Constitution and other legislation of Angola, which had ratified all the international instruments on children's rights and was implementing policies to improve their situation. The new draft constitution at present under discussion contained strong provisions on the protection and promotion of children's rights. The Criminal Code had been amended to bring it into line with the new definitions of certain crimes, including sexual exploitation, pornography, and the use of children in criminal practices. In June 2004 Angola had held a national

forum which had established the National Council for Children, made up of representatives of the Government and civil society. In September 2004 it had submitted its initial report on the application of the Convention to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and was currently taking action on the Committee's concluding observations, for it was determined to attain higher standards in the protection and promotion of children's rights.

10. **Ms. Sonaike** (Nigeria) said that her Government was continuing to build on the gains made in various areas of the protection of children, for example by enacting laws on prohibition of early marriage and on retention of girls in school, which had produced a modest improvement in the number of girls enrolled in primary school. With regard to health, the broad immunization coverage had been maintained, and the Government had continued to step up its efforts to deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other preventable diseases which affected children in particular, such as malaria, tuberculosis, polio and whooping cough. The Government had adopted a regional approach in cooperation with six other African States in order to ensure the maximum effectiveness of the polio immunization programme. In its fight against HIV/AIDS Nigeria had established a National Scientific Institute to carry out research and had intensified its public-awareness programmes on HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

11. Avenues had been created to facilitate the broad dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nigeria was doing everything within its power, in conjunction with other stakeholders, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and comply with the recommendations of the United Nations special session on children. The strategies included the creation of the Child Rights Information Bureau and a Children's Parliament, the celebration of annual events such as Children's Day and the Day of the African Child, and the establishment of regional centres by the African Network for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect to monitor violations of children's rights. The Government had also put in place policies and programmes to combat hunger with the aim of addressing poverty at the grass-roots level, for example the poverty-adjustment programme designed to reduce poverty in the household.

12. Nigeria was deeply concerned about the increased trafficking in children, in particular in the West African subregion. The Government had adopted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, which provided for the maintenance of effective communications to facilitate the rapid exchange of information on perpetrators of trafficking offences, as well as prohibiting forced labour and other forms of child abuse.

13. It was regrettable that, although States had demonstrated the necessary political will to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international community still faced a number of challenges in its implementation, in particular the commercial sexual exploitation of children, the conscription of children for armed conflicts, the effects of HIV/AIDS and other diseases on children, and the impact of poverty on vulnerable groups, especially women and children. The obstacles faced by the developing countries included their lack of resources, their debt burden, and the decline in international funding for programmes. The international community must also intensify its efforts to prevent children in conflict areas from becoming perpetrators of violence and to protect children against the scourge of war and sexual exploitation. Similarly, the growing inequity resulting from globalization and the inability of the developing countries to service their debt placed a strain on families and eroded the traditional extended-family systems, producing a further adverse effect on children. That problem should be tackled by strengthening the institution of the family and re-establishing some of the traditional family values, in particular the rejection of over-permissiveness and the instruction of children in moral values.

14. **Ms. Hastaie** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's comprehensive reports, particularly the one on the follow-up to the United Nations special session on children and the commitments set out in "A world fit for children" (A/59/274). Although countries had undertaken national activities to fulfil their obligations, only two years had passed since the special session, and much remained to be done.

15. There had been frequent discussion over the past few years as to the direction which the international community should take in order to ensure children's well-being and survival. At all the meetings, including the Millennium Summit in 2000, it had been made clear that there was a direct link between the living

conditions and development of children and women and the fate of their societies. Furthermore, many of the Summit's major goals related to the health and well-being of children and women, for their individual well-being was a prerequisite for economic development.

16. However, despite the increasing efforts and the progress achieved with regard to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children", in many places the situation of children had not improved. Millions of children still lived in poverty, had no education, were forced into work in which they were exploited or abused, or were victims of trafficking, prostitution, pornography or sexual abuse or harassment. According to UNICEF, an estimated 12 million children every year were victims of trafficking and the most serious forms of human rights violations and at the same time were denied their right to grow up in a family environment.

17. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognized that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Children who had no family were vulnerable to the worst forms of mistreatment and abuse. The protection and promotion of children's rights began at home, but the institution of the family needed to be strengthened at the national and international levels if it was to provide a healthy and affectionate environment. The Islamic Republic of Iran was fully discharging its obligation to secure the welfare of children by safeguarding their rights and it had seriously pursued the objectives of the Convention. For example, a large proportion of budgetary credits were allocated to social affairs, including general education, health, medical treatment and nutrition, social security and rehabilitation, physical training, skills development and research, especially in the country's less developed areas.

18. Over the past few years the judiciary had redoubled its efforts to apply the international standards relating to the rights of the child in the procedures for prosecuting minors. A number of seminars had been held in conjunction with UNICEF in order to improve the training of judges of the special juvenile courts and familiarize them with the standards set out in the international instruments, in particular the Convention. In addition, correctional and rehabilitation centres had been constructed in several provinces, and the intention was to extend the experiment to all the others. Special juvenile courts had been established, and the police had received special training in the protection of children. Iran was also giving serious consideration to the possibility of ratifying the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It believed that the general discussion on children's rights provided an important opportunity to recall the collective responsibility to secure children's rights and strengthen the commitment to those fundamental rights; it therefore firmly supported activities aimed at attainment of that goal.

19. **Mr. Wagaba** (Uganda) said that Uganda had continued its efforts to implement "A world fit for children", in particular in the health and education sectors. Its countrywide primary education programme had increased enrolment from 2.5 million children in 1986 to 7.5 million today. A countrywide secondary education programme would be initiated in the near future. The school curricula were also being improved by elimination of gender biases.

20. There had been other achievements: safe water coverage had risen from 10 per cent in 1986 to 60 per cent today throughout the country and from 17 to 70 per cent in urban areas; and over 80 per cent of children were immunized. The impact of HIV/AIDS had been mitigated but remained extremely negative; the disease was still the principal cause of death among children aged under five. The five-to-nine age group was relatively free of HIV infection but was equally affected by other consequences of HIV/AIDS. Thanks to financial assistance the implementing agencies providing psycho-social support were better equipped to address the needs of vulnerable groups, including their food security, nutrition and rights. Weekly awareness seminars were conducted on the basis of common guidelines formulated by all the stakeholders, including the Government, religious groups, communities and schools.

21. The Government had been working with UNICEF to improve the situation of orphans and other vulnerable children and to promote the rights of children by training child-rights advocates. Uganda was grateful for donations from UNICEF, in particular the recent gift of motorcycles to the Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans. At the regional level the East

African Community was also collaborating in primary-education activities. More than 300 East African primary heads were to meet in Uganda to discuss how to offer good primary education in the region. Teachers had recognized that good primary education could rescue societies from poverty and improve their general welfare.

22. In northern Uganda the terrorist organization known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony, was plundering and destroying communities and driving civilians to seek refuge in camps for internally displaced persons. Joseph Kony and his bandits were the sole perpetrators of the insurgency, and the Government had spared no effort to end it and restore peace and stability to the area. The war against the LRA had been successful and many of the rebel commanders had been killed or captured. An amnesty was currently in place for rebels who laid down their arms; they would be rehabilitated and reintegrated in society. However, the Government's offer of a dialogue had been ignored by the rebels. The Government had drawn up a comprehensive post-conflict rehabilitation and development programme for northern Uganda and it appealed to the international community to support the programme, which would facilitate the more effective resettlement of internally displaced persons, infrastructure rehabilitation, disarmament, demobilization, and the resettlement of rescued children and rebels who surrendered.

23. The Government had requested the International Criminal Court to investigate and prosecute Joseph Kony. Uganda expected that an arrest warrant would be issued shortly and appealed to all States to act on it. It also urged the international community to take action to end the plight and suffering of the people of northern Uganda caused by the criminal acts of the LRA and reiterated its call for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to give the situation a higher profile. In fact, the Special Representative had not responded to an open invitation from the Government to visit the region, where he had himself been born. It was surprising that he should attempt to describe, in unsubstantiated detail, a situation which he had not witnessed. Uganda therefore urged the Special Representative to visit the country's northern region to furnish himself with the true facts on the ground in order to embody them in a credible and reliable report.

24. His delegation was carefully studying the Secretary-General's report on a comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331). Although it hoped that a discussion of the matter would be held in the near future, it could already indicate its provisional agreement with the aspects of the report relating to objectivity, impartiality, transparency, accuracy and professionalism, in particular with regard to children and armed conflict.

25. His delegation would consider supporting options for predictable funding and regarded the Secretary-General's report as the most appropriate point of departure for addressing the issue. It was important in that connection to accommodate the general interests of all the Member States, so that the assessment would produce the desired effective outcome. The views of all the stakeholders should be taken into account with respect to reporting and monitoring. Ad hoc briefings could not constitute a serious exercise in that regard; the consultations must be rigorous and transparent if they were to result in a workable reporting and monitoring mechanism, as in the case of the 1996 Graça Machel report, which was transparent, objective, comprehensive and unpoliticized.

26. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that there were numerous issues of children's rights which needed to be addressed, but she would focus on the systematic denial of the rights of Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. For more than 37 years generations of Palestinian children had been subjected to the oppressive and brutal occupation of their country by Israel. The illegal policies and practices of the occupying Power had had a negative impact on the lives of Palestinian children. Their safety and well-being had been gravely endangered and in fact harmed, for Israel had denied them the basic human right: the right to life and personal security. They had also been denied the right to decent living conditions, adequate health care and, at times, even sufficient food and access to education. They had been irreparably traumatized, robbed of their childhood and forced to live in constant fear, insecurity and turmoil. The hardships endured by Palestine's children, the nation's future, would have lasting and devastating effects on Palestinian society for many years to come.

27. Over the past four years Israel had shown total disregard for the lives of Palestinian civilians, in

particular the children. As of 20 October 2004, Israeli forces of occupation had killed more than 3,412 civilians, including 753 children, whose names and ages were annexed to the text of her delegation's statement circulated at the meeting. The majority of those innocent children had been killed not during confrontations but during military and ground attacks by Israeli forces, carried out in an attempt to commit extrajudicial killings, or as a result of random firing. Furthermore, the majority of the child fatalities had resulted from head wounds – an indication that the children had been deliberately targeted. Particular attention must be drawn to the case of a 13-year-old Palestinian girl who had been murdered by Israeli soldiers, her body riddled by 20 bullets, as she walked to school, because they suspected that she was carrying explosives in her school bag; she had been carrying only school items.

28. As a result of Israel's oppressive measures and the widespread violence an alarming number of Palestinian children were suffering from psychological trauma, with the attendant symptoms of anxiety, fear, nightmares, anger and depression. Such children, who lived under constant threat from which there was no refuge even in the home, the classroom or the hospital, had witnessed the killing of their parents and brothers and sisters and other relations and friends, had seen their homes demolished, and lived in steadily worsening social and economic conditions. Thousands upon thousands were living below the poverty line and suffering hunger and malnutrition. The picture was markedly different from the one described in "A world fit for children".

29. In the light of that critical situation it was imperative to recall the relevant provisions of international law, in particular international humanitarian and human rights law. According to 27 Security Council resolutions, countless General Assembly resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention) should be applied throughout the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including East Jerusalem. According to the conclusions of the International Criminal Court and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child should also be applied there.

30. There was absolutely no doubt that the occupying Power was committing grave violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention in its policies and practices with regard to the Palestinian people, including Palestinian children. Nor was there any doubt that Israel was violating the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two international covenants, seriously damaging and endangering the lives of Palestine's innocent and defenceless children living in the occupied territories. Those children deserved a better life, a life in which growing, playing and learning in freedom, peace and security were not luxuries but realities.

31. Her delegation would resubmit the draft resolution adopted in 2003 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian children (resolution 58/155), for it was imperative for the United Nations to send out a strong and clear message to prevent the situation of Palestinian children from continuing to deteriorate.

32. **Mr. Nikiforov** (Russian Federation) said that the whole world had witnessed with horror the bloody tragedy of Beslan, when terrorists had murdered more than 300 innocent children. That uniquely cruel crime had reminded everyone that international terrorism had declared war on the international community and was directly threatening all the world's children. In order to achieve a world fit for children, everything possible must be done to ensure that such an act was not repeated. Terrorism must not be allowed to tear to shreds everything which the community of nations had achieved for the rights of the child.

33. The Russian Federation was grateful for the international assistance furnished to the children of Beslan through the funds and programmes of United Nations bodies and by the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental and voluntary organizations, which had been rapidly organized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. A few weeks earlier the Executive Director of UNICEF had visited the Russian Federation and reaffirmed her readiness to continue to cooperate with Russia to defend children's rights and, in particular, to help the victims of terrorism.

34. The advent of the new century prompted a reconsideration of the rights of the child in a globalized world in which previously unknown threats were

emerging. The goals set at the special session on children remained fully valid in that connection, and the countries of Europe and Central Asia had given them concrete form in the obligations assumed at Sarajevo. His Government was using those obligations as the basis for the formulation of its national programmes for children, in particular the federal programme "Children of Russia", prepared by the Government in collaboration with NGOs in the light of the recommendations made by the United Nations in connection with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The periodic reports submitted by States under the Convention were very important tools for monitoring its application; Russia was preparing its third periodic report for presentation in the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

35. **Mr. Noghès** (Monaco) said that today, more than ever before, the promotion of children's rights was a priority for the Principality of Monaco, a country which had fully endorsed the values and obligations of the Declaration and Plan of Action contained in "A world fit for children". Accordingly, his delegation welcomed the progress reported by the Secretary-General, for the formulation of national plans and regional arrangements implied a concrete commitment by Governments to the cause of children and young people. Notwithstanding the work done on the evaluation and strengthening of legal standards protecting children against violence, current developments meant that the international community must remain vigilant, for massive violations of children's rights were continuing and even growing in intensity.

36. According to UNICEF estimates, in 2003 there were 1.2 million children used as merchandise for the purpose of sexual exploitation and 180 million children performing the worst forms of child labour. Since 1990 more than 2 million children had died and 6 million had been wounded in guerrilla or civil wars and other conflicts. It was therefore a matter of urgency to include the situation of such children in the relevant programmes and projects of the United Nations system and, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), to devise an action plan for a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism to facilitate the adoption of measures when violations of the international law on children in armed conflict occurred. One means to that end might be to bolster the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict with a view to ensuring closer cooperation between national Governments, regional organizations and the various stakeholders and meeting the true needs of children.

37. On the question of the involvement of children in armed conflicts, trafficking in children, prostitution, pornography and the worst forms of child labour, in his statement in the General Assembly Prince Albert of Monaco had invited the international community to examine means of ending the prevailing impunity with respect to the most odious crimes committed against children. Only if the most serious violations of the rights of the child were declared not subject to a statute of limitation and only if the powers of national jurisdictions were expanded to include universal competence in such cases would it be possible to punish perpetrators of the crimes in question. In the present era of globalization, when new forms of organized transnational crime were emerging, it was essential for the prevention and deterrence of such crimes to be reinforced through international cooperation.

38. *Ms. Groux (Switzerland), (Vice-Chairman), took the Chair.*

39. **Mr. El Kadiri** (Morocco) said that his Government had introduced a series of measures to improve the situation of children. Where legislation was concerned, the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been incorporated in the domestic judicial system through the enactment of new laws and the amendment of important instruments such as, for example, the Family Code, the Decree on protection of abandoned children, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Criminal Code and the Civil Status Act. In the specific case of child labour, the Labour Code now set the minimum age for admission to employment at 15 years, and the sanctions for non-compliance had been increased. Thanks to the International Programme on the elimination of child labour (IPEC), 1,300 children had been re-enrolled in school or in vocational training.

40. In collaboration with various administrative departments, NGOs and UNICEF, the Secretariat of State for the Family, Children and the Disabled was currently drafting a children's code designed to improve the situation of children and focused in particular on combating sexual exploitation. The

Government had formulated in conjunction with UNICEF four programmes of cooperation for the period 2002–2006 with a view to consolidating the national priorities, the support provided for rural children, the protection of children, and the monitoring of the application of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The goals for 2015 included the reduction of the under-five mortality rate by two thirds and the elimination of illiteracy.

41. A start had been made on the formulation of a national action plan entitled "Towards a Morocco fit for children" in fulfilment of the commitments entered into at the United Nations special session on children. Morocco had also held many regional and international conferences, and from 14 to 17 December 2004 it was to host the second session of the Arab-African forum to combat the sexual exploitation of children. Pursuant to article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on promotion of children's participation in the democratic process, Morocco had created a Children's Parliament, a space where children could acquire culture and civilized values. In addition, children's councils had been established in the municipalities in order to encourage children to take part in local affairs and in development programmes. Attention must also be drawn to the important role of the National Observatory for the Rights of the Child, created in 1994, in promoting and protecting children's rights and raising society's awareness of them.

42. Morocco had been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1993 and had ratified the two optional protocols. In 2003 the Committee on the Rights of the Child had considered the country's second periodic report on the application of the Convention, and Morocco had recently submitted its initial report on the application of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. There was a need to continue to strengthen the cooperation between Governments, NGOs and civil society at the national, regional and international levels in order to achieve a world truly fit for children.

43. **Ms. Noman** (Yemen) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Despite the progress made since the United Nations special session on children and the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there was still far to go and the methods of work must be changed to facilitate the improvement of the situation of children and the protection of their rights. All countries must do their utmost to fulfil their international obligations, and at the same time the rich countries should help the poorest countries to carry out their national development policies and thus improve the standard of living of the whole population, including children.

44. Despite being a least developed country Yemen paid great attention to its children, who accounted for 50 per cent of the population, and allocated 27.1 per cent of its budget to education and health. Among the Government's achievements, attention must be drawn to the enactment of laws promoting breastfeeding and prohibiting female genital mutilation and to the initiation of various programmes to reduce infant mortality. Where education was concerned, an enormous reduction had been secured in the gender disparities by means of specific policies to encourage girls to go to school, and the quality of education had been improved through curriculum reform. The Government supported the international efforts to promote school attendance by abandoned children and integrate disabled children in society; it was carrying out specific programmes in those areas.

45. In the social sphere, a number of studies had been produced on the most vulnerable children and women and a national plan to end child labour had been initiated, together with a project on the rehabilitation of street children. In addition, orphanages had been established in several provinces. A national human rights strategy had been drawn up, and legislation, including a Children's Code, based on the international human rights treaties and the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been enacted.

46. The biological family must be accorded a central role in children's education and emphasis must be placed on the joint responsibility of the parents. It was also important to provide children with a good education, based in Yemen on Islamic precepts which accorded to all children a set of rights from the embryonic state. It was equally important to carry out programmes for the protection of children in early childhood. At the same time States had a responsibility to do everything possible to protect children in situations of armed conflict and to prohibit their use as soldiers. Attention must be drawn in that connection to the tragic situation of Palestinian children, whose aspirations and dreams were constantly being shattered

as a result of the violent occupation of their land by Israel. Her delegation appealed to the international community to make it possible for peace to return to the region and to improve the situation children throughout the world.

47. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said that his Government was fully committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of children; it had been one of the first Governments to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two optional protocols. It had created a Ministry for the Welfare of Women and Children and had adopted a National Plan of Action for Children in order to fulfil its international commitments. The Plan focused on the survival of children, their protection against diseases, and the education and nutrition of mothers and children. The decade 2001–2010 had been declared the Decade of the Rights of the Child in Bangladesh.

48. The biggest allocation in the national budget went to education, with special emphasis on girls. Primary education was compulsory for all, and an enrolment rate of 93.3 per cent had been achieved. The stipends and scholarships offered to girls up to the twelfth grade had had a positive impact on their enrolment, which in turn had helped to raise the age at which girls married and to improve the health of women and children. The informal education programmes had also helped to improve the situation. In the sphere of health, remarkable progress had been made in reducing child mortality and malnutrition through an extended immunization programme. A project on the registration of births had been started up, and special programmes were being carried out for disabled, abandoned and street children. Significant achievements had been made, with support from ILO and UNICEF, in the phasing out of child labour. Although Bangladesh was among the countries with the lowest incidence of HIV/AIDS, it had adopted as a precautionary measure a national HIV/AIDS policy which focused on children in particular.

49. The main institution for combating trafficking in persons, especially children, was the National Advisory Committee. Several awareness-raising and training programmes had been introduced for law-enforcement officers, and stringent legislation on trafficking had been adopted. At the regional level, the Government was a party to the Katmandu understanding on children and had signed the Convention of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on the promotion of child welfare. It had also played a leading role in the adoption of the SAARC Convention on preventing and combating trafficking in women and children for prostitution.

50. His Government believed that the best means of promoting children's development was to provide them with a social environment based on the values of pluralism, democracy, human rights, family tradition and cultural norms. It was carrying out its programmes and other measures for children in collaboration with the private sector, NGOs and development partners. Attention must be given at the global level to the situation of children affected by armed conflicts, including children living under occupation by a foreign Power, as in Palestine. For some years Bangladesh had been the main sponsor of the resolution on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, which had been adopted unanimously in 2003 with 55 sponsors. His Government was convinced of the need to mobilize international collaboration and resources to make children a central focus of the international development agenda. The international community must move beyond rhetoric and initiate an era in which the rules were applied in order to provide a peaceful and secure environment for all children.

51. **Ms. Tapsoba** (Burkina Faso) said that her Government had introduced a number of measures to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Burkina Faso, including the free distribution of 20,000 copies of the text and its translation into all the national languages, training for some 500 judges, journalists, teachers and members of the security forces to familiarize them with the Convention, and the holding of public meetings and transmission of radio and television programmes on the Convention. The Government had also enacted several pieces of legislation incorporating the Convention, including a national plan of action for the survival and development of children, the prohibition of forced and early marriages and the abandonment of children, the introduction of maternity and paternity leave and breastfeeding leave, the prohibition and punishment of female genital mutilation, the introduction of compulsory education between the ages of 6 and 16, the ratification of the ILO conventions on the minimum age of admission to employment and the worst forms of child labour, and an act prohibiting trafficking in

children. The Government had also taken children's interests into account in its poverty-reduction strategy, especially with regard to their health and education.

52. At the international level, in addition to ratifying most of the instruments on children the Government was doing what it could to take an active part in the meetings connected with those instruments. Its activities for the benefit of children would not be possible without the valuable assistance of its development partners, among which UNICEF deserved special mention. The Government and people of Burkina Faso were grateful for that assistance and hoped to continue to reinforce its collaboration with its development partners, for much remained to be done. Her delegation reaffirmed the importance which Burkina Faso attached to the rights of the child and the application of the Convention, for the human person was the central focus of the country's development policy.

53. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community and reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of Guyana to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the outcome document of the special session on children. The situation of children in the world remained a source of concern for the Government, which had begun the process of accession to the optional protocols to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

54. In January the Government had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in which it had highlighted both the successes achieved and the challenges still faced in honouring the country's moral and international obligations. In addition, it had formulated various plans and pieces of legislation on the protection of children but was encountering constraints in applying them owing to a shortage of human and financial resources; it therefore needed international assistance. Guyana was grateful in that connection for the help received both from the United States Government for HIV/AIDS programmes and from UNICEF and UNFPA.

55. With regard to corporal punishment, an issue on which there was no international consensus, Guyana's legislation punished child abuse and provided for intervention by the family welfare services when such abuse occurred. However, corporal punishment was maintained as a form of discipline under strictly controlled circumstances. Corporal punishment was the subject of a public debate, in which the country's children were also participating. But changes in a society's norms could not be imposed from outside. Differences had to be respected and action taken by consensus. Guyana was fully committed to cooperation with other countries to secure the comprehensive application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

56. **Mr. Al-Yasin** (Kuwait) said that the rights of the child were part of human rights and the fundamental rights of peoples. Kuwait had a young population: 50 per cent under the age of 18 and 27 per cent under 14. According to a 2004 UNDP report, it enjoyed a high rate of development – a fundamental factor for the flowering of the human person. Kuwait had initiated several experimental projects for children, including the establishment of scientific outreach centres, cultural centres, and a centre to monitor the implementation of the decisions adopted at various international conferences. A database on children and the family had also been created, and the country's legislation on women and children was currently under revision. The State allocated 8.4 per cent of the national budget to education and provided free education at all levels from kindergarten to university, as well as specific programmes for children with learning disabilities and special needs.

57. Kuwait had made great efforts to apply the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it had ratified in 1991, and its two optional protocols, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and it was also a party to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour.

58. Turning to the question of the situation of children affected by armed conflicts, he said that, although the Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children involved in armed conflict stressed that some progress had been made in that area, there was still a need for a monitoring mechanism to ensure that commitments under the relevant international instruments were fulfilled, with a view to ending the exploitation and hunger and the clear

violations of children's rights, in particular in the occupied Arab territories.

59. **Ms. Boiko** (Ukraine) said that the tragic situation of children all over the world, marked by violence and terrorism, demanded that their rights should be safeguarded so that they could enjoy their childhood. Ukraine strongly condemned all crimes committed against children, in particular terrorist attacks: it could not be accepted under any circumstances that children should fall victim to terrorism. Earlier in the year the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, had invited a group of children from Iraq and the Russian town of Beslan to visit the Artek International Children's Centre, where more than 300 children were currently being rehabilitated.

60. Ukraine welcomed the changes made in the national legislation of many States in order to prevent trafficking in children and child prostitution and pornography. It had ratified the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and it had initiated a programme to combat trafficking in persons in order to prevent women and girls from being removed from the country for the purpose of sexual exploitation abroad. Although the Criminal Code already criminalized trafficking in persons, the Government had proposed to Parliament several amendments to bring the Code into line with the relevant international standards. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, had pointed out in his statement in the General Assembly, tackling the trafficking issue required a comprehensive approach, increased international cooperation, the creation of an effective mechanism to combine the efforts of the countries of origin, transit and destination, and the formulation of strategies based both on measures to ensure enforcement of the law and on improvement of the economic and social circumstances of potential victims.

61. Ukraine gave special attention to questions of the protection of children, as could be seen from the fact that its Protection of Childhood Act designated activities in that sphere as a strategic national priority. However, despite the progress made, a number of challenges still had to be taken up, including issues connected with the health care and rehabilitation of the people affected by the tragic accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, in particular children and pregnant women, and the fight against the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic by means of measures to reduce the number of infected infants.

62. **Ms. Bowen** (Jamaica) said that her delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representatives of Qatar and Barbados on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Caribbean Community respectively. In spite of the relatively peaceful nature of the Caribbean region, it was not exempt from armed conflict, which posed one of the most serious threats to the realization of the human rights of children at the most basic level, i.e. the right to life and the right to enjoy childhood.

63. Jamaica was concerned that many of the Millennium Development Goals might not be attained within the agreed time-frame and that the children of the developing world were unable to realize their full potential owing to poverty, illiteracy, poor health and lack of opportunities. The spate of hurricanes which had recently devastated many of the islands of the Caribbean region served as a reminder of the vulnerability of small island States and of the necessity of collaboration to respond effectively to the needs of children, one of the most vulnerable population groups. Jamaica was deeply appreciative of the response of the international community, including UNICEF, to such disasters, which could swiftly destroy years of work and progress. However, it was necessary to give continued support to the aid mechanisms in order to ensure their sustainability for the benefit of children. In that connection her delegation requested a re-assessment of the criteria for determining the level of assistance for developing countries which fell outside the category of countries in greatest need of assistance.

64. International cooperation must be complemented by action at the national level if the desired goal of creating "A world fit for children" was to be attained. In that regard Jamaica had taken an integrated approach in promoting children's rights through the implementation of its National Plan of Action and the enactment of legislation and it had established a Child Development Agency to promote children's development by means of the creation, implementation and coordination of programmes and policies designed to fulfil the country's commitments under the international agreements. It had also established a National Human Rights Institution to protect children's rights and had adopted a policy to counter violence

against children. Other initiatives included the creation of a juvenile unit in the police force and a victim support unit in the Ministry of National Security to assist child victims of violent crime, and the incorporation of human rights topics in early education. One of the country's most important goals was to reduce the number of children infected by HIV/AIDS by 20 per cent by 2005 and by 50 per cent by 2010.

65. **Mr. Taranda** (Belarus) said despite the progress made in protecting and promoting children's rights much remained to be done, as could be seen from the especially vulnerable situation of children affected by armed conflicts and the fact that there were still more than 10 million child deaths from disease, 600 million children living in poverty, and over 100 million without access to education.

66. His delegation felt for the large number of victims of terrorist attacks in the Russian Federation and elsewhere in the world and it affirmed its solidarity with the families of the deceased. The United Nations must give special attention to the protection of children's rights as part of the world campaign against terrorism, and UNICEF could play an important role by addressing that issue in its strategic programme documents.

67. The national policy of Belarus was designed to create favourable conditions for improving the situation of children and safeguarding their rights and interests. The main objectives were to encourage a healthy lifestyle, guarantee quality education, furnish assistance to needy families and the most vulnerable children, prevent juvenile delinquency, improve the quality of the care services for children affected by the Chernobyl disaster, and provide protection against HIV/AIDS and other threats to children's health and well-being.

68. Belarus had created institutions to defend and promote the rights of the child and was continuing to harmonize its domestic legislation with the provisions of the Convention. The National Plan of Action for the protection of children's rights in the period 1995–2000 had resulted in the adoption of more than 27 pieces of legislation and standards for the benefit of children. Public institutions based their activities on the Children's Rights Act and the presidential programme "The children of Belarus, 2001–2010". There was also a National Children's Rights Commission, which coordinated the implementation of all the measures adopted in that sphere.

69. The National Plan of Action for improvement of the situation of children and protection of their rights for the period 2004–2010, the document forming the basis for the determination of the national strategy for protecting children's interests in the long term, placed particular emphasis on assigning priority to children's interests in the social policies for children and in the policies for their physical, intellectual and moral development, as well as on improving their standard of living, protecting their health, and defending and raising awareness of their rights. The Plan contained a list of the goals set out in the outcome document of the special session on children, entitled "A world fit for children", and the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the second periodic report of Belarus on its application of the Convention. It must be stressed that children and young people were taking an increasingly active part in the formulation and implementation of programmes for the promotion and protection of their rights, in particular through voluntary activities, peer teaching, and involvement in the youth communications media. At present Belarus had 132 youth organizations and children's funds and associations.

70. To mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child Belarus was planning to hold a series of nation-wide information and awareness-raising events to familiarize the public with the rights of the child and publicize the Convention's objectives. UNICEF was also doing important work in that area by carrying out projects to publicize the rights of the child, secure the rehabilitation and social integration of disabled children, prevent juvenile delinquency, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS among young people, encourage a healthy lifestyle, and establish children's homes.

71. The United Nations should give greater attention to trafficking in children, which was one of the most flagrant violations of human rights. The dissemination of knowledge and exchange of information and experience between neighbouring countries and regions was one strategy which might deliver better results in the fight against that scourge. UNICEF could also do important work in that area, and the efforts of the international community would be considerably enhanced by the creation by the Commission on Human Rights of the post of Special Rapporteur on

trafficking in persons. Special emphasis should be placed in the context of protecting children's rights on the reduction of environmental pollution, which had an adverse impact on children's health and well-being.

72. **Mr. Tan Kee Kwong** (Malaysia) said that in its resolution 59/245, co-sponsored by his delegation, the General Assembly had decided that the activities under the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should be supported through regular budgetary funding. Having waited for almost two years for the issuance of the report on the question by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, his delegation now noted with disappointment that the report was silent on the issue of funding, other than to state that Member States might perhaps wish to consider the best means of financial support for the Office of the Special Representative. The report stated clearly that there continued to be a need for the Special Representative and that his mandate should remain unchanged, with perhaps some of the details spelled out more clearly. The report did not explain why the Office had been initially set up outside the ambit of the regular budget and why it was now faced with a funding problem when it had subsisted on voluntary funding for eight years. Since the mandate was to remain unchanged, his delegation did not understand why there should now be a need to explore alternative means of funding and it hoped to receive a response on the matter from the Secretariat, for its questions had not been answered either in the report or during the dialogue with the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services.

73. Despite the progress made in promoting and protecting children's rights, much remained to be done, and his delegation reiterated the need for concrete action to ensure that children's rights were respected and protected. However, many of the problems faced by children were closely related to under-development, poverty and conflicts in developing countries, and it would be impossible to find solutions until those matters had been addressed and the countries in question had been provided with the necessary assistance and resources. Malaysia has been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1995; it had adopted various measures and initiated programmes to secure the well-being of children, attend to their social needs and safeguard their rights, including the second National Plan of Action for Children, the 2001 Children's Act, the amendment of legislation in order to eliminate exploitation and trafficking of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the National Social Policy approved in 2003.

74. Malaysia had registered remarkable success in education, as could be seen from its primary enrolment rate of 98 per cent. The Government had now embarked on improvements to provide children with access to the best possible education system and enable them to compete in the rapidly advancing information age. The measures adopted in that regard included the modernization of schools, teacher training, and the provision of computer laboratories and equipment in all schools.

75. **Mr. Rokolaqa** (Fiji) said that his delegation welcomed the positive developments reported to the Committee with regard to the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the follow-up to the United Nations special session on children, in particular the large number of States which had signed the Convention and its two optional protocols and incorporated the outcome document of the special session in their own national action plans with a time-bound set of goals. On ratifying the Convention in 1993 his Government had established the Coordinating Committee on Children with a mandate to translate the Convention into a strategic national plan and monitor and review the implementation of the plan's programmes and initiatives. Since one of the Government's main purposes was to encourage families to look after their children in a responsible manner, it had adopted in October 2003 the Families Act, the purpose of which was to protect the general interests of children, including children of divorced parents, by reinforcing parental and family responsibilities towards their children.

76. Violence against children was a shameful violation of the very principle of human rights: it manifested itself in many forms and occurred even in the home. For some time it had been feared that the commercial sexual exploitation of children might become a problem in Fiji and that the child prostitution market, having been subjected to a crackdown in some parts of the world, might move to the Pacific regions. The Government welcomed the participation of civil society in its efforts to care for the victims of violence and abuse; at the same time it was trying to raise public

awareness of the subject and create a trusting environment for children, as well as reviewing national legislation with a view to bringing in harsher penalties for persons committing acts of violence against children.

77. There was an urgent need for Governments to take action to abolish child labour throughout the world. To that end his Government had ratified ILO Convention No. 138 on the minimum age of admission to employment and Convention No. 182 on the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. The Government was currently revising its policy and legislation on the employment of children, as well as reviewing all its labour legislation, in order to bring them into line with the ILO requirements. It also intended to address the root causes of child labour, draw up the necessary policies and laws, and implement the required programmes.

78. The Government was doing everything in its power to improve children's health. A centre had been established under the auspices of the Ministry of Health to provide peer counselling and conduct advocacy for preventive health programmes reaching out to communities and schools. Education and awareness programmes on reproductive health and contraception were being actively promoted in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. The Government had introduced education for family life in school curricula in order to increase the awareness of primary and secondary pupils with respect to matters of sexual health and the importance of chastity and morality in sexual behaviour as understood in the country's diverse culture.

79. The education system was in a period of transition in which new policies were being formulated to cater better to pupils' needs. The Government was addressing the challenges of securing greater equality in the educational achievement of the various social groups and reducing the financial burden of education on parents. The partnership between the State and the wider community, one of the distinctive features of education in Fiji, had facilitated progress towards compulsory free education. Tuition was now free from year 1 to year 11, but the other costs of education were borne by the parents. However, the question of whether the Government of a developing country such as Fiji could afford free education had yet to be resolved, although the Government was firmly committed to enabling all children to fulfil their potential through access to quality education.

80. **Mr. Israeli** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that those delegations which blamed Israel for the suffering of Palestinian children should understand that nobody was denying the existence of such suffering. The question was: where did its origins lie? And the answer was: with the Palestinian leaders, who had decided to continue on the path of violence rather than the path of reconciliation and who, by their irresponsible decisions, had robbed their country's children of hope. The interests and rights of Palestinian children could not be safeguarded by leaders who allowed terrorists to operate from within civilian areas, sheltering behind schools and hospitals and putting the lives of Palestinian children at risk, or by corrupt leaders who condemned their children to poverty and preached martyrdom in their education system in order to create a new generation of terrorists. Nor should anyone forget the right of Israeli children not to be murdered by rockets fired by terrorists from within civilian areas, in contravention of international humanitarian law, and not to be murdered in public places, in their homes or in their parents' arms. In order to safeguard the rights of Israeli and Palestinian children it was necessary to follow the path of reconciliation indicated in the Road Map, to put an end to terror and embrace anew the hope offered by negotiations.

81. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the accusation made by the representative of Israel that the Palestinian leaders sent children to be murdered was a flagrant manifestation of racism and revealed Israel's intention to denigrate the victims in order to dehumanize the Palestinian people by insinuating that those leaders cared less for the lives of their children than did the leaders of other peoples. The purpose of that kind of statement was to try to divert attention from the adults who were truly responsible – the Israeli soldiers who shot and killed and the Israeli Government which supported such crimes. The Palestinian people had no need to bring their children to violence because violence came at their children from all directions: at school, at home, and in the street. As to the Palestinian leaders' alleged incitement of hatred, the propensity to hate was not determined by genes but built by society, and suicides were not born but were made. Moreover,

when comparing the violence committed by the two parties it was necessary to distinguish between individual acts, such as the ones committed by a few Palestinians, and the acts of Governments, such as the ones committed by Israel. Palestinian children could not feel happy or content in an environment of violence, destruction and oppression in which they were robbed of their childhood. If Israel wished to save children's lives, it must end its occupation.

82. **Mr. Israeli** (Israel), referring to the article in the Israeli press mentioned by the representative of Egypt at a previous meeting, which had condemned the violence suffered by Palestinian children, said that the day when the Palestinian communications media expressed similar thoughts and showed the same compassion towards Israeli victims of the violence would mark the approach of the end of the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.